

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENNA 2354

EXDIS/NOFORN

FROM US REP MBFR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: FARM, NATO

SUBJECT: MBFR: DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET REPS MARCH 13, 1974

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: AT SOVIET INVITATION, US REP AND DEPREP MET WITH SOVIET REPS KHLESTOV AND SMIRNOVSKY ON MARCH 13. REMARKS OF SOVIET REPS INDICATED THAT THEIR OBJECTIVE IN ASKING FOR MEETING WAS TO ASSESS ACCEPTABILITY OF THEIR MODIFIED PROPOSAL FOR SYMBOLIC REDUCTIONS. US REP MADE CLEAR STRONG WESTERN OBJECTIONS TO SYMBOLIC PROPOSAL EVEN IN ITS MODIFIED FORM AND STATED THAT ONLY WAY TO EUROPEAN REDUCTIONS WAS VIA PRIOR US-SOVIET REDUCTIONS. HE URGED SOVIET REPS TO SETTLE THE QUESTION OF WHICH FORCES WOULD BE ADDRESSED FIRST ON A PRIORITY BASIS, FROM THE QUESTION OF HOW MANY FORCES WOULD BE REDUCED. END SUMMARY.

2. KHLESTOV BEGAN BY SAYING THAT HE HAD SUGGESTED THE DISCUSSION IN ORDER TO ENABLE A CONFIDENTIAL BILATERAL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN THE TALKS THUS FAR AND OF FUTURE PROSPECTS. SOVIET REPS HAD BEEN FEELING THEIR WAY IN DEVELOPING CERTAIN IDEAS IN RECENT WEEKS AND WANTED TO BE SURE THAT THEY WERE ON THE RIGHT TRACK. HE THEN ASKED US REPS FOR THEIR ASSESSMENT OF THE USEFULNESS OF THE INFORMAL SESSIONS.

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3. US REP REPLIED THAT HE CONSIDERED THESE SESSIONS A USEFUL VEHICLE FOR A SYSTEMATIC EXCHANGE OF OPINIONS. THEY HAD NOT YET BROUGHT SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS, BUT THEY WERE PRODUCING INFORMATION ABOUT THE VIEWS OF EACH SIDE WHICH WAS NECESSARY FOUNDATION FOR PROGRESS. KHLESTOV SAID HE AGREED WITH THIS ASSESSMENT; INFORMAL SESSIONS SHOULD CONTINUE.

4. KHLESTOV SAID SOVIET REPS HAD PUT A GOOD DEAL OF EFFORT INTO DEVELOPING THEIR PRESENT PROPOSAL FOR SYMBOLIC REDUCTIONS. HE WOULD LIKE A FRANK ASSESSMENT FROM US REPS AS TO THE PROSPECTS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THIS APPROACH. SOVIET REPS THOUGHT THE CONCEPT HAD SOME POSSIBILITIES.

5. US REP SAID HE THOUGHT MOST RECENT SOVIET PROPOSAL HAD SOME POSITIVE ASPECTS. THE IDEA OF A GLOBAL CEILING COMBINED WITH THE IDEA OF LIMITATION ON ENTRY OF FORCES FROM THE OUTSET HAD SOME POSITIVE ASPECTS FOR LATER USE. DESPITE RELUCTANCE OF SOVIET REPS TO ADMIT THIS, HE ALSO CONSIDERED THAT, SINCE SOVIETS CLEARLY WERE ENVISAGING A SEPARATE SIGNATURE AND IMPLEMENTATION PLUS CONTINUATION OF NEGOTIATIONS, THEIR PROPOSAL WAS IN FACT CONCEIVED IN TERMS OF SEPARATE STAGES OF NEGOTIATION. HOWEVER, HE WISHED TO MAKE QUITE CLEAR THAT THE US HAD TWO FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIONS TO THE SOVIET SYMBOLIC PROPOSAL; IT UTILIZED THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP OF FORCES AS THE BASIS OF REDUCTIONS, THUS SANCTIONING THE CONTINUATION OF THAT RELATIONSHIP, AND IT PROVIDED THAT ALL PARTICIPANTS WOULD REDUCE FROM THE OUTSET. US REPS WERE CLEARLY AWARE OF SOVIET INTEREST IN EUROPEAN REDUCTIONS. BUT HE HAD TO TELL SOVIET REPS IN ALL SERIOUSNESS THAT THE ONLY WAY TO EUROPEAN REDUCTIONS WAS THROUGH PRIOR US-SOVIET REDUCTIONS. THIS WAS A POLITICAL FACT. ALLIES HAD ALREADY TOLD EAST ENOUGH ABOUT PHASE II TO INDICATE THAT THEY WERE ACTING IN GOOD FAITH AND THAT THEIR NEGOTIATING APPROACH WAS A PRACTICAL ONE. IF THE EAST REALLY WANTED RESULTS BY 1975, STARTING WITH US-SOVIET REDUCTIONS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO MEET THIS GOAL.

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6. SOVIET REP SAID US REPS WERE FULLY AWARE OF SOVIET OBJECTIONS TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ALLIED REDUCTION PROPOSALS. THESE PROPOSALS WERE INEQUITABLE AS TO THE EASTERN AND WESTERN REDUCTIONS PROPOSED AND THEY EXCLUDED AIR AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS. FURTHERMORE, THEY POSTPONED EUROPEAN REDUCTIONS TO SOME NEVER-NEVER LAND. SOVIET REPS HAD TRIED TO FIND SOME MIDDLE WAY BETWEEN

THEIR STARTING PROPOSAL AND THE ALLIED APPROACH. THEY HAD DEVELOPED A NEW POSITION WHICH MET US INTERESTS ON THREE POINTS: IT DROPPED NATIONAL SUB-CEILINGS AND IT COULD SPECIFY THAT IT WOULD NOT BE A PRECEDENT FOR FURTHER REDUCTIONS; AND IT LEFT IT TO EACH SIDE TO DETERMINE HOW MANY FORCES SHOULD BE REDUCED FROM EACH NATIONAL FORCE, ALTHOUGH ALL SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN REDUCTIONS.

7. AS ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON SOVIET SYMBOLIC REDUCTION CONCEPT, SMIRNOVSKY SAID IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THIS BY JUNE OR JULY. (COMMENT: SOVIETS MADE NO MENTION OF US-SOVIET SUMMIT AT ANY POINT IN CONVERSATION.) NEGOTIATIONS WOULD CONTINUE IN FALL ON FURTHER REDUCTIONS. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYMBOLIC REDUCTION WOULD TAKE PLACE DURING 1975. A SYMBOLIC REDUCTION AGREEMENT WOULD CONTAIN A CLAUSE, SIMILAR TO THAT PROPOSED BY WEST FOR ITS PHASE I, COMMITTING PARTICIPANTS TO

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FROM US REP MBFR

NEGOTIATE FURTHER; THIS CLAUSE WOULD REMAIN IN EFFECT EVEN AFTER THE SYMBOLIC REDUCTION WAS IMPLEMENTED.

8. US REP SAID HE FELT SOVIET REPS HAD DEMONSTRATED A DESIRE TO FIND AN OUTCOME. HOWEVER, THEIR PROPOSED SOLUTION WAS AN INADEQUATE ONE. REGARDLESS OF WHATEVER

MIGHT BE SAID ABOUT IT IN THE TEXT OF ANY AGREEMENT, THE BASIS FOR REDUCTIONS WOULD BE THAT ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY THE EAST, THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP OF FORCES. MOREOVER, IT WOULD INVOLVE THE WESTERN EUROPEANS IN REDUCTIONS FROM THE OUTSET WITH RESULTING LIMITATIONS ON THEIR ARMED FORCES. THIS WAS DIFFERENT IN ITS CONSEQUENCES FROM US AND SOVIET WITHDRAWALS. AS HE HAD JUST STATED, THE WAY TO WESTERN EUROPEAN REDUCTIONS WAS VIA US-SOVIET REDUCTIONS FIRST. THIS WAS A POLITICAL FACT.

9. SOVIET REPS CLAIMED US REPS HAD NOT MADE GOOD ON ORIGINAL OFFER TO PRODUCE ASSURANCES OR CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING WESTERN EUROPEAN PARTICIPATION IN PHASE II IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROCEDURAL PROPOSAL WHICH THEY HAD MADE AT THE OUTSET OF THE PRESENT INFORMAL SESSIONS. ALLIES HAD IN FACT NOT ADVANCED ANY COMMITMENT EXCEPT TO STATE THEIR WILLINGNESS TO START PHASE II NEGOTIATIONS AT SOME FIXED PERIOD OF TIME.

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10. US REP POINTED OUT THAT SOVIETS HAD NEVER ACCEPTED THE PROCEDURAL APPROACH ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY US REPS BUT HAD INSISTED THAT A DIFFERENT APPROACH BE USED AS THE BASIS FOR THE INFORMAL SESSIONS. HENCE, THEY COULD SCARCELY FAULT US REPS FOR NOT FULFILLING THEIR PART OF THE BARGAIN. US REP POINTED OUT THAT, NONETHELESS, ALLIES HAD GIVEN REASONABLE COMMITMENTS REGARDING WESTERN EUROPEAN PARTICIPATION. SOVIETS SHOULD SEPARATE THE ISSUE OF A COMMITMENT TO REDUCE FROM A DECISION ON WHEN AND HOW MUCH TO REDUCE. THE ALLIES HAD ALREADY GIVEN ASSURANCES ON THE FORMER POINT AND HAD TOLD SOVIETS THAT PHASE II WOULD FOCUS ON WESTERN EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS.

11. SMIRNOVSKY SAID ALLIES HAD MADE THEIR LIMITED ASSURANCES CONTINGENT ON SOVIET ACCEPTANCE OF COMMON CEILING CONCEPT. IN ADDITION TO OTHER SHORTCOMINGS, THE COMMON CEILING IDEA DID NOT SPECIFY HOW MUCH INDIVIDUAL WESTERN EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS WOULD REDUCE IN PHASE II. THE SOVIETS HAD A LEGITIMATE INTEREST IN THIS POINT. THEY DID NOT WANT TO LEAVE IT UNCLEAR. US REPS SAID THIS ISSUE WOULD BECOME MORE CLEAR IN THE COURSE OF PHASE II NEGOTIATIONS.

12. KHLESTOV ASKED, ON THE THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION THAT INITIAL REDUCTIONS WERE LIMITED TO US AND SOVIET FORCES, WOULD US BE WILLING TO REDUCE 20,000 OR 10,000 TROOPS IN RETURN FOR REDUCTION OF 20,000 OR 10,000 SOVIET REDUCTIONS? US REP SAID ONE SHOULD SEPARATE THE TWO

QUESTIONS INVOLVED HERE. THE FIRST WAS THE QUESTION OF WHICH FORCES TO ADDRESS FIRST. THE SECOND QUESTION WAS HOW MUCH SHOULD THEY REDUCE. SOVIET REP KNEW US DID NOT ACCEPT THE IDEA OF EQUAL NUMBER REDUCTIONS. BUT TREATMENT OF THIS WHOLE SECOND QUESTION SHOULD BE POSTPONED. PARTICIPANTS SHOULD FIRST AGREE ON WHICH FORCES TO ADDRESS FIRST.

13. KHLESTOV DISPUTED WHETHER THIS COULD BE DONE IN ISOLATION FROM AGREEMENT ON AMOUNT OF REDUCTIONS. HE ASKED WHAT OBLIGATION THE WESTERN EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS
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WOULD ASSUME IN THE EVENT THE WESTERN TWO-PHASE APPROACH WERE TO BE FOLLOWED. IT WOULD BE INEQUITABLE FOR THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES TO ASSUME OBLIGATIONS AND FOR THE OTHER DIRECT PARTICIPANTS TO ASSUME NONE AT ALL. WHAT ABOUT A FREEZE?

14. US REP SAID HE DID NOT THINK THAT WHAT KHLESTOV WAS TALKING ABOUT WAS A PRACTICAL PROBLEM. HE DID NOT THINK THAT CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME WOULD BE SUCH THAT INCREASES FOR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WERE A REAL PROSPECT BETWEEN TWO PHASES OF NEGOTIATION.

15. KHLESTOV SAID THIS WAS US REP'S PERSONAL FORECAST. WHAT ABOUT A COMMITMENT? US REP SAID THAT COMMON CEILING WOULD PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE FREEZE. BEYOND THAT, ONLY FURTHER DISCUSSION OF ALLIED PROPOSAL WOULD SHOW WHETHER THERE WERE ANY REAL PROBLEM HERE AT ALL.

16. KHLESTOV ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS REALLY ANY CHANCE FOR WESTERN ACCEPTANCE OF THE SYMBOLIC REDUCTION IDEA. US REP SAID HE HAD LOOKED OVER THE ISSUE FROM EVERY ANGLE AND SAW NO CHANCE OF FORWARD MOVEMENT ON THIS PROPOSAL. THE ONLY WAY TO MOVE TO EUROPEAN REDUCTIONS WAS TO HAVE PRIOR US AND SOVIET REDUCTIONS. KHLESTOV SAID IF THAT WAS THE OVERALL SITUATION, HE COULD SEE NO POSSIBILITY OF MOVEMENT. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NOW IN THE INFORMAL SESSIONS?

17. US REP SUGGESTED THAT THESE SESSIONS BE USED FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT MATTER AND THAT THE SOVIETS SHOULD REFLECT FURTHER ON THE POINTS THAT HE HAD MADE. IT WAS A FACT THAT NO SOLUTION WAS YET IN SIGHT ON THE SPECIFIC TOPIC OF WHICH FORCES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED FIRST, BUT HE WAS NOT PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE LONG RUN PROSPECTS FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS.

18. DISCUSSION THEN BROKE UP. IN LEAVING, KHLESTOV

ASKED US DEPREP WHETHER AN EQUAL REDUCTION OF 10,000
US AND 10,000 SOVIET FORCES WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE AFTER
ALL. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT THIS WOULD BE IN THE
CONTEXT OF A FIRST PHASE US-SOVIET REDUCTION. US
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DEPREP SAID US POSITION HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE CLEAR.
IT WOULD BE BETTER TO FOCUS FIRST ON THE QUESTION OF
WHICH FORCES WOULD BE REDUCED FIRST AND ONLY THEN TURN
TO THE QUESTION OF HOW THEY WOULD BE REDUCED.

19. THE AD HOC GROUP HAS BEEN GIVEN AN ACCOUNT OF THE
MAIN LINES OF THIS DISCUSSION.HUMES

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